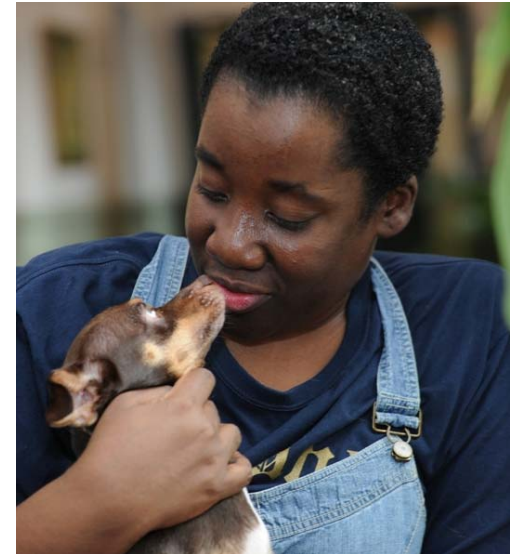




Pet Access



Part 1: History, Procedures,
Facts & Figures

History

- Community Access
- Founded in 1974 as a response to the mass release of patients from NYS psychiatric hospitals
- Now housing over 1,000 individuals, the majority of whom have psychiatric disabilities

History

- Until 2004, did not allow pets in buildings
- Organizational shift: pets allowed
- Pet Access born, on premise that pets can be therapeutic and help in recovery for psychiatric disabilities
- Difference between Pet Access pets and other pets in CA buildings
- What Pet Access provides

Procedures

- Only open to CA tenants and program participants
- Application package filled out
- Roommate written approval if applicable
- Must have secondary caretaker
- Pet trainer visit for Orientation session
- Applicant never permanently denied:
 - 1) Revisit application
 - 2) Type of pet discussion

Procedures

- If approved, service coordinator and applicant go to pet shelter
- Applicant picks out pet
- No dogs over 45 pounds. No dog or cat under 1 year old.



Procedures

- Same day or next day at latest, applicant and Pet Access staff pick up supplies
- Information given to applicant about free vet services up to \$ 700 for first year, and free pet training services

Procedures

- 6 and 12 month testimonials sent to applicants, soliciting their opinions
- Low cost vet options sent at 12 months
- Resource information constantly disbursed, such as: pantries that give out pet food; pet volunteer opportunities; grief counseling, etc.

Procedures

- Monthly Pet therapy sessions held at sites
- Quarterly pet/owner “Get Togethers” held at sites
- Constant follow up on pets’ wellbeing through service coordinators and pet owners

Facts and Figures

- Approximately 65 pet owners in CA buildings. Forty-one are sponsored by CA (including house pets):
 - 22 Cats
 - 10 Dogs
 - 5 Fish owners
 - 2 Turtle owners
 - 2 Bird owners

Facts and Figures

- Survey as of 4/30/2012 of Supportive Housing tenants in Pet Access program for at least 1 Year:
- Percentage of days in psychiatric hospital *before* Pet Access: 1.48%
- Percentage of days in psychiatric hospital *after* Pet Access: 0.59%

END OF PART I





Part 2:
Additional Pet Programming

Additional Pet Programs

- Pet Therapy
- Pet Training
- Outreach
- Pet Meet-ups
- Pet Access Committee Support
- Staff Training
- Fundraising

Pet Therapy

- Monthly visits to interested Community Access housing sites
- Currently visit two locations
- Delta Certified Pet Therapy animals
- One hour visits
- Set time schedules – found that it is best to set schedules after a house meeting
- Respectful of those who do not want to participate

Pet Therapy *(Continued)*

- Regular clients look forward to visits
- Make sure to give everyone equal time with pet – as individuals can get upset
- Enjoyable for both the clients and pet therapy animal/handler



Pet Therapy Outcomes

- Pets help clients feel at ease and less anxious
- Visits give clients something to look forward to, especially if they cannot have pets themselves
- Clients really enjoy talking about the pet therapy animals, as well as their own lifetimes with pets
- Gets clients excited about their recovery so that they can one day have their own place with their own pet
- Gets clients interested in volunteering or eventually doing pet therapy themselves to help others like them
- Helps clients to smile even if they're having a bad day
- Brings people together in a social manner





Pet Training

- We offer pet training services to all Pet Access participants, but also to anyone in our program with pets
- We spend as much time with each client as necessary to help them gain the knowledge they need regarding pet behavior
- Unlimited sessions offered per client
- Community Access offers a training specialist for both cat and dog behavior – and for integrating multiple pet households

Pet Training *(Continued)*

- Orientation session required as part of Pet Access application – this visit goes over all information related to pet care for whatever animal the client is interested in
- Pet trainers will also work with Community Access staff to put plans together if the client is having trouble with certain aspects of pet ownership – to get them back on track to a happy and positive relationship with their animal

Outreach

- Visit with all Community Access programs to advertise the program
- Bring pet therapy animals to informational meetings so individuals can gauge whether the program is for them
- Work with Community Access staff to educate them on the program – information that is then passed on to clients
- Provide any materials needed to clients and staff regarding program information/general pet information

Pet Meet-Ups

- Meet-up group for all pet companions and owners in our buildings heavily populated with pets
- Pet trainers in attendance to answer any behavioral questions
- Information provided on low-cost vet options, spay/neuter, bereavement, etc.
- Pets allowed with proper vaccinations and spay/neuter
- Great social opportunity for people and pets!!!
- Held quarterly

Pet Access Committee Support

- Pet Access Committee works to approve Pet Access program participants, but also provides support services for all pet-related issues
- Committee votes on fiscal coverage for animals not in our program as well as house pets
- Supports special-need cases wherein the client and staff need additional support and consultation
- Provide knowledge of housing rules in relation to pets, and discuss neglect cases as needed (this rarely happens due to our due-diligent application process)
- On a limited basis only when necessary, work with the Mayor's Alliance to help with certain animal related matters

Staff Training (new initiative)

- Community Access believes that pets can significantly aid mental health recovery
- With so many individuals in our programs having pets – and the positive impact it has had on their mental health – we know that staff roles are essential in helping with the Pet Access program and client's pets
- As such, Pet Access is currently in the process of creating a staff policy and procedure manual relating to this program
- Pet Access will work with management to define staff roles
- Once completed, Pet Access will educate staff during new staff orientations, staff trainings, and management training sessions

Pet Access Funding

- Government contract money
- Individual fundraising
- Foundation support
- Pet Access fees are now being charged to each individual site in which the funding was used (for instance: for an adoption at our Water Street site funds will come out of that site's budget)
- Fundraising for this program requires that pertinent statistics are monitored and tracked, and also diligent and timely budgeting



Pet Access Helps People...

- Recover from mental health issues
- Become more social
- Gain independence
- End addictive and destructive behaviors
- Help others
- Learn to trust and love again
- Learn how to be more patient
- Become very happy

Pet Access Client Quotes

- “I’m so much more careful about my recovery because I have to care for my pets. They depend on me.”
- “Since I walk her, I get to meet people.”
- “I get less and less panic attacks.”
- “I can’t imagine betraying her and going back to my old ways.”
- “He has shown me that it is ok to love and to be happy.”

Happy Clients



END OF PART 2

Questions?



Part 3: Pet Law Brochure

- The Pet Law Brochure was written by MFY Legal Services in 2008
- The idea for the book started at Community Access in 2005
- Community Access was just building its Pet Access program at the time
- The building owners Community Access rented apartments from did not want to accept pets in their buildings

Pet Law Brochure *(Continued)*

- The most simple and far reaching rule of law in NYC is actually called the Pet Law
- This rule of law is valid for everyone, not only people with mental health concerns
- A tenant must keep a pet “openly and responsibly”
- The landlord must know, or in some cases *should have* known, about the pet

Pet Law Brochure *(Continued)*

- There are certain federal and state laws applicable only to mental health recipients and other people with disabilities
- Under both the United States Fair Housing Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act, people with disabilities are allowed to own pets despite a “no pets” clause in a lease

Pet Law Brochure *(Continued)*

- The pets that tenants with psychiatric disabilities are allowed to own are called emotional support animals/pets
- This category is different from a service animal, which requires specific training
- There are four criteria for a tenant to prove that the FHA/ADA allows her to keep or get a pet

Pet Law Brochure *(Continued)*

- Criteria to get an emotional support animal:
 1. Tenant has a disability
 2. The animal is needed to allow the tenant to function
 3. The housing is covered under these federal or state laws
 4. The request for the animal is reasonable in breed and size

Pet Law Brochure *(Continued)*

- The most difficult criteria to prove is that the tenant needs the pet to alleviate their disability

Examples:

- * You have major depression or anxiety and your pet encourages you to leave your house
- * You have schizophrenia and it is hard for you to interact with other people. The pet alleviates your isolation.

Pet Law Brochure *(Continued)*

- What should you do if you have a pet and your tenant is threatening eviction, *or*
- You want a pet and you remember that your lease has a “no pets” clause?
- Get a lawyer. Do not attempt this alone.
- Call Dinah Luck at MFY Legal Services: (212) 417-3700.

Pet Law Brochure *(Continued)*

- If you choose to go forward without an attorney, here is what you can do:
 - ✓ Discuss your need for a pet and the existence of the federal laws allowing you to keep an emotional support animal

Pet Law Brochure *(Continued)*

If your landlord says no to your request for a pet, you should see a lawyer

If you go it alone, you need to get:

- ✓ A letter from a psychiatrist or therapist (clinician), explaining how a pet helps ease your mental health condition
 - ✓ Remember anything your doctor says in this letter can be used against your desire to get an emotional support pet if you get an eviction notice.
- ✓ A letter from you as a tenant

Pet Law Brochure *(Continued)*

- Issues to think about when challenging a landlord's decision to deny you a pet?
 - Will a pet bring you happiness and wellness?
 - Will a pet ease your loneliness, depression or anxiety?
 - Will your doctor or therapist help you to get a pet?
 - Are you emotionally ready to challenge your landlord?
 - Do you have enough money and time for a pet?

Pet Law Brochure *(Continued)*

- SPECIAL RULES FOR THOSE IN NYCHA:
 - Service dog category in NYCHA is described broadly enough to allow for emotional support animals
 - Anyone can register a dog under 25 lbs if the dog is not a Pit bull, Doberman or Rottweiler
 - Your dog has resided in NYCHA for at least six years

For more information contact

Dinah Luck of MFY at (212) 417-3700